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Sanborn's initiative for stricter landfill inspections now law

LANSING – Legislation to require increased statewide landfill inspections and random inspections of waste being transported to landfills was signed into law today, announced Sen. Alan Sanborn, R-Richmond Township, sponsor of one of the bills.

“This legislation is vital for protecting Michigan’s environment,” Sanborn said. “Until the federal government allows Michigan to restrict the flow of out-of-state waste to our landfills, we must be vigilant in enforcing our higher standards for waste disposal, and not let toxic or banned materials fill and contaminate our facilities.”

Senate Bill 499 requires the state Department of Environmental Quality to provide a statewide landfill inspection program, which would mandate at least four inspections of each landfill each year. Random inspections on the contents of trucks transporting waste also will be made regularly to ensure compliance with state law.

The bill is part of a comprehensive revision of the state’s solid-waste management laws to include additional protections against the disposal of inappropriate waste in Michigan’s landfills.

The new rules require all Canadian and out-of-state waste to meet the same stringent standards Michigan has for its own waste. Landfills will be required to refuse any out-of-state waste that did not meet the tough standards.

The bills:

- Require landfills to refuse waste, regardless of its source, that did not meet Michigan’s stringent waste standards, starting Oct. 1, 2004;
- Grant the DEQ director emergency power to prohibit any waste shipment that poses a threat to the public’s health or safety or to the safety of the environment;
- Add new fines of up to \$25,000 per day for violating certain laws related to disposing of waste in landfills; and
- Mandate a two-year moratorium on issuing certain new landfill permits.

Bill sponsors include Sens. Sanborn; Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township; Bruce Patterson, R-Canton; Nancy Cassis, R-Novi; Mike Bishop, R-Rochester; and Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac.